



## A qualitative examination of the health workforce needs during climate change disaster response in Pacific Island Countries

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### Abstract:

**Background:** There is a growing body of evidence that the impacts of climate change are affecting population health negatively. The Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to climate change; a strong health-care system is required to respond during times of disaster. This paper examines the capacity of the health sector in Pacific Island Countries to adapt to changing disaster response needs, in terms of: (i) health workforce governance, management, policy and involvement; (ii) health-care capacity and skills; and (iii) human resources for health training and workforce development. **Methods:** Key stakeholder interviews informed the assessment of the capacity of the health sector and disaster response organizations in Pacific Island Countries to adapt to disaster response needs under a changing climate. The research specifically drew upon and examined the adaptive capacity of individual organizations and the broader system of disaster response in four case study countries (Fiji, Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa). **Results:** 'Capacity' including health-care capacity was one of the objective determinants identified as most significant in influencing the adaptive capacity of disaster response systems in the Pacific. The research identified several elements that could support the adaptive capacity of the health sector such as: inclusive involvement in disaster coordination; policies in place for health workforce coordination; belief in their abilities; and strong donor support. Factors constraining adaptive capacity included: weak coordination of international health personnel; lack of policies to address health worker welfare; limited human resources and material resources; shortages of personnel to deal with psychosocial needs; inadequate skills in field triage and counselling; and limited capacity for training. **Conclusion:** Findings from this study can be used to inform the development of human resources for health policies and strategic plans, and to support the development of a coordinated and collaborative approach to disaster response training across the Pacific and other developing contexts. This study also provides an overview of health-care capacity and some of the challenges and strengths that can inform future development work by humanitarian organizations, regional and international donors involved in climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction in the Pacific region.

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### Resource Description

#### Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

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## **Communication Audience:**

audience to whom the resource is directed

Health Professional, Policymaker

## **Exposure :**

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event

**Extreme Weather Event:** Drought, Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones

## **Geographic Feature:**

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Ocean/Coastal

## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

**Non-United States:** Australasia

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

## **Medical Community Engagement:**

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

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## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

## **Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion

## **Resilience:**

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

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## **Timescale:**

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

## **Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:**

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

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